

# DOT: Drivers urged to slow down as construction begins on Madison Beltline

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The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is urging drivers on the Madison Beltline (US 12/18) to slow down as nightly lane closures begin at 6:30 p.m. tonight (March 1) between Stoughton Road and Todd Drive. The nightly lane closures will occur from 6:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. weeknights. Various interchange ramps with these limits will also be closed nightly from 6:30 p.m. to 5 a.m.; closures are announced via message boards on the ramps.

Motorists are advised to obey the posted limit of 55 mph; plan ahead for backups and delays; and allow extra time to reach their destination. The lane restrictions, ramp closures and work operations are weather dependent and subject to change.

Work zone safety is one of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's top priorities and the penalties for careless driving are steep.

- In work zones, penalties are doubled. Penalties for speeding may range up to \$600. For motorists, a second violation within a year may carry a penalty of up to \$1,200.
- Careless drivers may face fines of up to \$700 and a possible 3 ½ years in prison if they injure someone in a work zone. The fines for vehicular manslaughter are even higher, as are the prison terms - as many as 10 years. These punishments may increase if the driver was intoxicated or a repeat offender.
- It is illegal to talk on a handheld mobile device while driving in a Wisconsin work zone. Drivers caught in violation face fines of up to \$40 on first offense and \$100 for subsequent offenses.

Remember, when you enter a work zone, be patient and pay attention to your surroundings.

- **Eliminate distractions** like eating, drinking, talking on the phone, or using other electronic devices.
- **Expect the unexpected.** Speed limits may be reduced, traffic lanes may be changed, and people and vehicles may be working on or near the road.
- **Give yourself room.** Rear-end collisions are the most common work zone crashes, so don't tailgate.
- **Allow about four seconds of braking distance and look for signs.** Orange, diamond-shaped signs usually give you ample warning of lane closings, construction areas, and flaggers and other workers ahead.
- **Be patient.** If you don't see workers, that doesn't mean they're not there. Observe the signs until you see one that says you've left the work zone.
- **Plan ahead.** Leave early or map out an alternate route. Find the latest road conditions and work zone news at [511 Wisconsin](https://www.511wi.gov).
- **Follow the law.** Slow down or move over, if possible, when you see flashing lights.

The Flex Lane project will improve the Madison Beltline inside median shoulders for use as an additional travel lane during peak traffic periods from east of the Whitney Way exit to the I-39/90 interchange. In addition, the project will address deteriorating pavement; improve existing drainage deficiencies; and replace the existing median barrier wall along the Beltline. The \$45.1 million project is expected to be completed by December 2021. The Flex Lane is anticipated to open in late 2021 or early 2022.

Information on the Flex Lane project can be found at <https://projects.511wi.gov/flexlane/>, including weekly updates about the construction progress and associated traffic impacts.

-WisDOT-